

MASONIC MUSINGS

The Masonic Education Newsletter

of Lodge Epicurean No 906 and Lodge Amalthea No 914

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Welcome to *Issue Ten*. On this occasion we deal with the *Blazing Star* – a rarely addressed topic. The following article, which I have annotated, is by relatively-new Queensland Master Mason, Bro David Taylor, of Cairns, and was presented in the W H J Mayers Lodge of Research, therein. A *Question and Answer* follows...

Fraternal regards,
Kent Henderson.

Blazing Star? What Blazing Star?

‘The Blazing Star is the first and most exalted object that demands our attention in the Lodge’ – Albert G. Mackey

I am a new member to the Craft and my interest in the Ritual is mainly in its esoteric content and how it can improve my life. I presume to teach you nothing, simply to share with you my thoughts in the hope that I may learn.

After I was raised I began a study of the First Tracing Board Lecture and it soon became very obvious to me that the Blazing Star is the key figure of the Lecture. So I began to ask questions about it and my journey began. The first thing I did was put questions to the Brethren of my Mother Lodge and my journey paused.

Bro Joseph Fort Newton is one of the great Masonic authors. His first experience of the Craft was so similar to mine that I cannot help but quote him:

‘When I was made a Mason I began to ply the Master of the Lodge with questions as to what it was all about. It was a totally new thing to me, unlike anything I had ever met – a new world, with a law and language of its own, different from any environment I had known – and my curiosity stimulated my audacity.

The Master did not give me much information, and much of what he gave me I learned later was wide of the mark. He knew the Ritual, but what the Ritual meant, beyond its obvious moral teaching, he did not know; nor could he tell me its story.’

I am not quoting Bro. Newton as a criticism of any Brother at my mother Lodge, but rather to point out that this is a problem that new Brethren to the Craft have been encountering for a long time and that many of you I believe will be able to relate to.



A First Degree Tracing Board

For some reason I expected all the answers to my questions to come from members of my Lodge; that I might be considered disloyal if I asked elsewhere. I was wrong, and going forward I decided to look inside and outside my Mother Lodge for answers.

My first task was to find a more detailed definition of the Blazing Star. I sought advice from the Grand Librarians of Queensland and NSW and both recommended the following sources among others:

From Mackey's Encyclopedia: *'The Blazing Star, which is not, however, to be confounded with the Five-Pointed Star, is one of the most important symbols of Freemasonry, and makes its appearance in several of the Degrees.'*

Bernard Jones's 'Freemasons Guide and Compendium' contains the following on the Blazing Star:

'According to a majority of masonic writers, the hexalpha is the Seal of Solomon and the Shield of David, but a minority give these names to the pentalpha.' *'It has other names including the hexagram, a name which is applicable to any six-line or six-sided figure. It is the six-pointed star or Blazing Star.'*

The Jewish Encyclopaedia describes the six pointed Star as the Seal of Solomon and notes the following regarding the use of the pentalpha as the Seal of Solomon:

'In Western legends, however, it is the pentacle, or 'druid's foot,' that represents the seal. This figure, called by Bishop Kennet the 'pentangle' of Solomon, was supposed to have the power of driving away demons.'

Here began my problems. The star that I thought was the Blazing Star of the First Tracing Board has seven points. Putting that issue aside, I still wanted to know why all but a few Masonic scholars stated that the Blazing Star has six points!



Hexalpha

I found answers from numerous sources but none put as eloquently as this 1872 sermon given by Bro William B. Greene which I thank W.Bro Lovewell for sending to me:

'At an unknown and remote epoch, it was affirmed, probably by some Hamite, as a postulate of faith, that God and man are in the

same likeness or image. It was also affirmed, as a logical consequence of this fundamental affirmation, that, since man is triune, the Supreme is also triune, and that, since man may be denoted by an ascending triangle, the Supreme may be denoted by a descending triangle.'

These words of Bro Greene's create an image in my mind of my initiation, blind folded and hoodwinked, kneeling under the wands of the Deacons, emblematically forming that lower triangle of the Blazing Star. Presenting myself to my God in a Lodge that I would later be told stands on Holy Ground. Bro Greene continues:

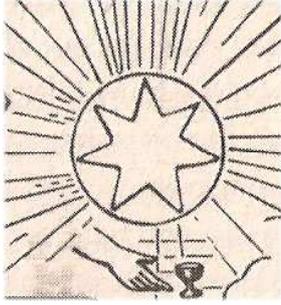
'It was also affirmed, perhaps at the same unknown epoch, that the interlacing of the Divine triangle with the human triangle, in the six-rayed Blazing Star, is the authentic symbol of the revelation of God to man, and of the abode of the Supreme in the human heart, as well as of the aspiration of man towards God.'

So now convinced that the Blazing Star should have six points I wanted to know why there was none present on the First Tracing Board. Again I was searching for a symbolism, a message. I asked Grand Lodge for assistance on this and was referred to RWBro Neal Hewton of the Barron Barnett LoR, Qld. Bro. Hewton very kindly supplied me with the following comments:

'The star shown on the tracing board is simply a representation of a blazing star, and in my Lodge has seven wavy points with another six wavy points behind.' *'It is there simply as a representation, not meant to be the ornament. It is only visible during the first degree.'*

Bro Hewton's comments confirmed to me that the seven pointed star was the Blazing Star referred to as an Ornament of the Lodge in the Ritual but did not provide the symbolism that I believed must exist. I searched on and made the decision to join the W H J Mayers Lodge of Research. At the first meeting I attended, that audacity that Joseph Fort Newton speaks of led me to a discussion with RWBro Haussmann that revealed a symbolism to the seven points of the Blazing Star of the First Tracing Board that I had been searching for. The following comments are taken from an email RWBro Haussmann sent me after that meeting and relate to a Scottish Ritual that was used in 1906 at the consecration of his Lodge:

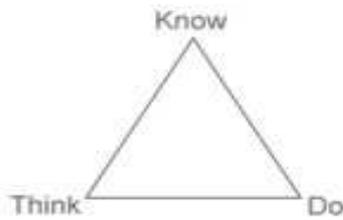
'On turning it up: I find that it defines the Blazing Star as having seven points. It adds the following to the UGLQ ritual after dispensing blessings, 'Its seven points refer to the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences through which enlightenment is obtained.'



Blazing Star on a First Tracing Board

In the absence of any explanation in the UGLQ ritual, the esoteric meaning assigned in that Scottish Ritual to the seven points of the star of the first Tracing Board, is indeed very interesting. It was however, not until I started my study of the Second Degree Tracing Board that I could see how well that symbolism fitted into the Ritual. It is my belief that the seven pointed star of the First Tracing Board is a clue to what is to come in the Second Degree.

The Triune self and the rule of three



- EA, FC & MM
- Wisdom, Strength & Beauty
- Faith, Hope & Charity
- Love, Relief & Truth
- 3 Great Lights
- 3 Lesser Lights
- 3 Movable Jewels
- 3 Immovable Jewels
- Virtue, Honour & Mercy
- Corn, Wine & Oil
- etc. 

Previously Bro Greene spoke of the Triune self. The doer, thinker and knower. To me the three Craft degrees represent those states. The first degree teaching us how to be the doer. I quote from the First Degree Tracing Board Lecture:

The Square teaches Morality, the level Equality and the Plumb Rule justness and uprightness of life and actions.

The Second Degree is teaching us how to liberate our minds. To be the thinker. You will all recall these words of the Second Degree in the Charge after Investiture:

'...as a craftsman you are expected to make the Liberal Arts and Sciences your future study, in order that you may be the better enabled to discharge your duty as a Freemason and rightly estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty Creator.'

And finally in the Third Degree we are taught of the time when we will become the knower. Our spiritual, moral and intellectual rebirth.

To me the seven pointed Blazing Star of the First Tracing Board is a sign post to the direction forward in Masonry. It points us to the path of becoming a thinker whilst still alluding to the ultimate truth, the union of God and man as represented by the hexalpha, the six pointed Blazing Star. I refer you back to the description

RWBro Hewton gave of the Tracing Board in his mother Lodge:

'and in my Lodge has seven wavy points with another six wavy points behind'

I further believe the seven pointed star of the First Tracing Board is directing us to the W... S... of the Second Degree Tracing Board and the skills we will need to ascend it.

We are told the following with regard to the W...S... in the Second Tracing Board Lecture:

'consisting of three, five, seven or more steps'

And later in the Ritual we are told the following regarding those seven steps:

'they have likewise a further allusion to the seven Liberal arts and sciences.'

Our progress up the steps of the W... S... is symbolic of our acquired knowledge of the Seven Liberal Arts and Sciences. And as we ascend that W... S... we get closer to that state of unity with our God, symbolised by the six pointed Blazing Star as depicted on the Second Tracing Board. We do not reach it but we are close enough to see it in its true form now. We have undergone a liberal and virtuous education that now enables us to rightly estimate the wonderful works of the Almighty Creator.

WBro R A L Harland, past President of the Dormer Circle in a paper on the Second Tracing Board, points out the following reference to the Temple at Jerusalem found in the New Testament;

'The gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful.' The Acts, iii, 2:

He then comments with the following regarding this Biblical connection to our ritual:

'.....the porchway leading to the W... S.... This is said to be that of the Temple of Solomon, although it must be borne in mind that the Temple at Jerusalem, like a modern cathedral, had not one but several entrances, and being itself symbolic each of the three main entrances was emblematic and represented one of the various ways by which the central Truth may be apprehended.'

Bro Harland next describes the first two gates, but it is the third that is of interest to us:

'Still others may advance by the purely intellectual way, the paths of Heavenly science; through the gate of Wisdom, contemplation, and enlightened mental application. All three ways or gates lead to the Centre, but the illustration on the Tracing Board refers to the gate of Wisdom, which is metaphorically called the porchway entrance of King Solomon's Temple in allusion to the traditional teaching attributed to the wise King.'

Bro Harland's comments remind me of the presence in some lodges of a Second Degree Tracing Board depicting two scenes of the Temple rather than the usual one. I have been told by the Deputy Grand Secretary one of these boards is in current use in a Lodge in Brisbane. The designer of this dual scene Tracing Board was an Englishman called John Harris (1791-1873).



A Second Tracing Board



Dual scene Tracing Board by John Harris

The most commonly used versions of the Tracing Boards for the three Degrees found in Lodges today are of, or are based on Bro Harris's designs. The single scene Second Degree Tracing Board found in most Lodges, and used by the UGLQ, was also designed by Bro Harris.

So why this variation in the form of the Second Degree Tracing Board, which he created after the single scene version? What was Bro Harris trying to teach us that he could not do in one scene?

Bro T O Haunch of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 gives this explanation in a 1962 paper:

'Harris seems to have had second thoughts about depicting the Temple in a single scene. Seeking evidently, to reconcile Biblical accounts and Masonic legend, he splits his picture into two separate scenes: the lower showing the principal entrance to the Temple with the Two Great Pillars, etc: the upper showing that other porchway or entrance situated, according to Masonic tradition on the South side'

It appears that, like WBro R A L Harland of the Dormer Circle, the Biblical connection was of significance to Bro Harris. The most commonly used Ritual and Tracing Boards in Masonry today share a link to the Emulation Lodge of Instruction. Emulation Lodge was created in England in 1823 and I will discuss its purpose in more detail later when we address the Ritual currently used by the UGLQ.

'The ornaments of the Lodge are the Mosaic Pavement, The Blazing Star and the Indented or Tessellated Border.' – First Tracing Board Lecture, UGLQ

So where is the Ritual telling me to look for the Blazing Star in my Lodge? Mackey states that the Blazing Star is:

'the first and most exalted object that demands our attention in the Lodge.'

Masonic Scholar and Author, W.Bro Tony Pope of the Canberra Lodge of Research and Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Council, offered the following:

'Allowing for the fact that some rituals, lodges, and jurisdictions, do not have pavements/carpet/TBs/Floor cloths, the object in the middle of the pavement/carpet/floor cloth is usually a 5-pointed star, and in many English,

Australian, and other rituals it is called the Blazing Star, or the Glory in the centre'

In 1864 Bro Oliver, a Christian Minister who was referred to as the 'Sage of Masonry', penned the following regarding the floor of the Lodge and the position of the Blazing Star on it:

'Freemasonry further teaches her children, through the medium of the symbolical floor of the Lodge, to observe the diversity of objects which decorate and adorn the creation, the animate as well as the inanimate parts thereof.' And:

'The Blazing Star in the centre refers us to that grand luminary the sun, which by its benign influence dispenses its blessings to mankind in general, giving light, life, and motion to all things here below.'

Now I would like to point out something that lead me to great confusion over this matter as a new Freemason trying to give relevance to the Ritual.

There is no star of any kind in the middle of the Mosaic Pavement of my Mother Lodge nor District Grand Lodge at Minnie St. How can the key figure of the First Tracing Board Lecture be absent from the Lodge?



Mosaic Pavement
Pyramid-Highleigh Lodge No161, Queensland

In one of those audacious moments that Bro Newton and myself are known for, I questioned a Brother about this. He assured me in Lodge that as a past AGSWks, a holder of many of the 'Higher Degrees', and a Mason of many years standing who had travelled throughout the district, that I was mistaken and would 'never' see a star of any kind in the middle of the Mosaic Pavement.

I have seen in every Lodge room at GL in Ann St; Grand Lodge in Adelaide; on the lodge floor of Bartle Frere (where I took my second Degree); and again on the floor of Millaa Lodge, a five pointed star. So here we encounter several issues:

Firstly, when a star is present on the Lodge floor in Qld, it is usually a 5 pointed star, a Masonic Star. Secondly, the irregularity of Lodges. Thirdly, the level of Masonic Knowledge amongst Masons in general.

Let's address the five pointed star first. R.W.Bro Hewton believes that the 5 pointed star on the Lodge Floor is the Blazing Star mentioned in the First Tracing Board Lecture as an Ornament of the Lodge:

'I am not sure but this mixing of shapes could result from the fact that prior to the formation of the Grand Lodge of England, the Ancients used the Pentalpha shape and the Moderns the Hexalpha shape as the Masonic star.'

So what does the five pointed star represent? As the Masonic Star it alludes to the Five points of Fellowship. In the *Emulation Ritual* we use, it is the Morning Star of the third degree which we are asked to raise our eyes to; a direct reference to Christ as made in Revelation, chapter 22, verse 16. In the English version of ritual called 'Revised Ritual', reference to the Morning Star is replaced with the following to avoid any objections from Masons of non Christian faiths:

'and lift our eyes to Him in whose hands the issues of life and death, and to whose mercy we trust for the fulfillment of his gracious promise of peace and salvation to the faithful'

Still today in many American Lodges this five pointed star is directly referred to as the Star of Bethlehem in their Ritual. It also has a further Christian allusion to the five wounds of Christ. Even here in the District of Carpentaria I recently attended a Lodge where the Officers sing 'Onward, Christian Soldiers' as they circumambulate the Lodge to exit.

With Christianity having had such a profound influence on the relative modernisation of our ritual, I believe this is the most likely reason why the five pointed star has found its way onto our Lodge floors. Used in preference to the six pointed star, which to most non Masons I would suggest represents Judaism.

'In all regular well formed and Properly constituted Lodges, there is a point within a circle around which the Brethren' – First Tracing Board Lecture, UGLQ

Well it appears my mother Lodge is neither regular nor well formed! There is no Point within the Circle on the First Tracing Board of my mother lodge and until I replaced the point that had fallen off the front of the altar, there was none there also.



Grand Hall, Grand Lodge
Ann St Brisbane

Add to that the absence of the Blazing Star from the floor and I find that the Lodge is not consistent with the First Tracing Board Lecture when I present it there. I have a theory as to how this irregularity in our Lodges has come about and it is based on our Masonic heritage here in Queensland.

Bro Pope has done quite a deal of research into the layout of Lodges and I would ask you to keep in mind the qualifications he placed on his comments regarding the usual position of the Blazing Star in the Lodge;

'Allowing for the fact that some rituals, lodges, and jurisdictions, do not have pavements/carpets/TBs/Floor cloth,'

With that in mind, in 1900 here in Qld we had Lodges operating under Scottish, Irish and English Constitutions. It was not until 1921, prompted by the non recognition of some of our Queensland Masons abroad in the war, that nearly all these Lodges joined to form the United Grand Lodge of Queensland.

I have already mentioned 'The Revised Ritual' but In the late 1800`s and early 1900`s these are some other Rituals that I have found recorded as being in use in England at the time;

Claret, Unanimity, Bristol, Oxford, Perfect Ceremonies, Humber, York, Stability, The Exter Ritual, Britannia and The English Ritual.....

I am sure there are many others and we have not even mentioned the Scottish or Irish.

The UGLQ use yet another version of the Ritual that originates from England called Emulation. Given the prevalence of the use of Emulation Ritual today I feel its history is very relevant to Masonic Education and knowledge.



First Tracing Board and Altar of Pyramind - Highleigh Lodge 161H

In 1823, the 'Emulation Lodge'...or in its full name, 'Emulation Lodge of Improvement for Master Masons Lodge of Instruction' was formed in England, 10 years after the consummation of the Union of the rival Grand Lodges of the Moderns and the Antients that Bro Hewton referred to previously. Its initial role was to instruct on the Lectures of the 3 degrees as submitted to the UGLE by the Lodge of Reconciliation. However six years after its formation, Emulation Lodge was also instructing on Ceremony and the Emulation Ritual was born. The Emulation Lodge has also had a great influence on the Tracing Boards most commonly found in Lodges today. You will recall previously I mentioned Bro Harris with regards to the Second Degree Tracing Board depicting two scenes of the Temple.

In 1845, it was a committee appointed by the Emulation Lodge of Improvement that selected boards created by Bro John Harris for the three Degrees from entrants in a competition to create improved versions. Whilst continuing his association with the Emulation Lodge Bro. Harris continued to work on and modify his Tracing Boards. The most noticeable example of this is the creation of a Second Degree Tracing Board with the two scenes. One of the main 'principles' of the Emulation Lodge was to have Masons of

the time recite and perform one uniform Ritual as perfectly as possible.



Freemason's Hall, Great Queen Street, London

Whilst Emulation Ritual has become very popular, there have been and still are critics. Dr E.H. Cartwright, past Grand Deacon UGLE and Barrister at Law, in 1947 wrote these words with regards to Masonic and Grammatical errors then present in Emulation Ritual;

'This is the result of a systematic campaign of propaganda in favour of the Emulation working and the Emulation principle, which was started about 1890 by certain devotees of that Instruction Lodge whose zeal for the only working they knew outran their knowledge of Freemasonry and their acquaintance with the English language'

Bro. Cartwright is referring to the 'Parrot Mason'. He felt that the Emulation Lodge of Instructions strong emphasis on word perfect ritual was being put before the need for Masons to understand the Ritual. Basically, that form was being put before function.

Could it be that the lack of popularity for the revised dual scene Second Degree Tracing Board

is also indicative of a lack of interest in, or desire to possess knowledge of the more esoteric meanings in our Ritual; even as far back as the mid nineteenth century? I would also like to remind you of the words of Joseph Fort Newton that I quoted at the beginning of this presentation regarding the WM of his Mother Lodge at the beginning of the twentieth century:

'He knew the Ritual, but what the Ritual meant, beyond its obvious moral teaching, he did not know; nor could he tell me its story.'

Should we expect any different in the twenty-first century?



**First
Tracing Board**

**Second
Tracing Board**

**Ann St
Grand Hall**

First Tracing Board - Second Tracing Board - Ann Street Grand Hall, Brisbane

My study of the Blazing Star as it relates to the ritual of the UGLQ has led me to form the following opinions, which I welcome your comments and corrections on:

The Hexalpha, the six pointed star is the true Blazing Star. It is the symbol of the unity of God and Man; in one image or likeness. It represents to me the goal of Freemasonry and is depicted on the Second Tracing Board.

The 7 pointed Blazing Star of the first Tracing Board has an allusion to the seven Liberal Arts and Sciences and is preparing us for our ascension of the W... S... of the second degree, whose seven steps among other things represent an obtained knowledge of the same.

When the Blazing Star is depicted in our Lodges it is located in the middle of the Mosaic Pavement; It is 'The Glory in the Centre' and it is usually a Masonic Star; a pentalpha, and alludes to the Five points of Fellowship and to Christians the five wounds of Christ and the Star of Bethlehem.

The absence of the Blazing Star from the floor of some Lodges is probably a result of the

unification of Lodges in 1921 in Queensland and the lack of knowledge of the Emulation Ritual by those furnishing the Lodges.

'Pride in unsound theories is worse than ignorance' – Albert Pike

Knowing the symbolism behind the 5, 6 and 7 pointed stars exposes me to messages that are helpful to my life and allow the Ritual to 'make sense to me'. Knowing a little of the evolution of the Ritual allows me to be tolerant of discrepancies such as the Blazing Star being absent from the Lodge Floor. In fact, the Blazing Stars absence from the Lodge floor now reminds me more of its message than its presence does.

To me Masonry is a life tool, its teachings needs to be relevant to my life to maintain my interest. Memory tests, public speaking and marching are not what I joined Masonry for. Joseph Fort Newton wrote this wonderful definition of Freemasonry that I agree with strongly:

'Each man sees in Masonry the thing nearest to his own nature and need, his own heart and thought, but there is much more than he sees, Masonry itself, like its symbols, being a benign

and beautiful mystery which many behold, each from his own angle and point of view, but which no one exhausts.'

In closing, great Masonic writers like Mackey, Gould and Pike, to name but a few, have all had their writings revised to correct errors and reflect

changes in views. Many of them acknowledging that this would later need to occur even at the time they wrote their works. This would seem to me, as a newcomer to Freemasonry, a great approach to adopt to this paper, Freemasonry and life in general.

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Jewish Encyclopaedia

'ARS Quatuor Coronatorum Vol LXXV – Tracing Boards: their designers and their development' by T O Haunch 1962.

UGLQ Ritual. April 2007 Edition

Grand Lodge of Scotland Ritual Book marked, 'Revised 1916' and stamped 'Lodge Heather, Friezland, N.Q.' S.C.1,111.

A Royal Stamp

Opposite is an image, taken which was on the Internet, of the 1946 **Victory stamp** issued by the British government to commemorate victory in WW2. His Majesty King George VI was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland before the War, and was also a Past Grand Master of England. Note the Masonic symbols, particularly the depiction of the square & compasses with one point exposed, which is the custom of that particular Grand Jurisdiction. In his victory speech, the King stressed the value of Freemasonry in post War reconstruction, with these words: *'The world today does require spiritual and moral regeneration. I have no doubt, after many years as a member of our*

Order, that Freemasonry can play a most important part of this vital need.'



QUESTION & ANSWER

What is the significance of the Five-Pointed Star in Freemasonry?

It is an ancient talisman and the design was frequently used by Operative Masons as a Mark engraved on stones in ancient buildings (i.e. a Mason's Mark). The Five-Pointed Star is stated to refer to:

- The five who hold a Lodge.
- The Five Senses — Seeing, Hearing, Feeling, Tasting and Smelling, indicating perfect health of body and mind.

The Five-Pointed Star is sometimes referred to as the Pentalpha, meaning five –which, if arranged in a circle with the vertices outwards, form a Five-Pointed Star.

According the Coil's *Masonic Encyclopaedia* it is a Pythagorean symbol, but is not mentioned as such in the Masonic Ritual, and seems never to have been a Masonic emblem. The Blazing Star in the centre of the Mosaic Pavement is a quite different symbol.

The claim by some Brethren that the Five-Pointed Star refers to the Five Points of Fellowship seems to be an attempt to find an explanation for something which has found its way into Freemasonry by accident.